

To: wq-news@googlegroups.com[wq-news@googlegroups.com]
From: wq-news@googlegroups.com
Sent: Fri 7/11/2014 11:14:19 PM
Subject: [WQ News] Pavillion-area residents object that Encana will get 1st look at contamination study reports

Pavillion-area residents object that Encana will get 1st look at contamination study reports

By MEAD GRUVER Associated Press
July 11, 2014 - 6:01 pm EDT

CHEYENNE, Wyoming — People dealing with polluted groundwater in the Pavillion area have objected that a gas developer can review and comment on two state investigations involving the contamination before the public is allowed to see the reports.

Representatives of Pavillion Area Concerned Citizens filed a state records request Thursday seeking the draft reports. They say Wyoming law doesn't provide for Pavillion gas field owner Encana to review the reports before the general public.

"We believe that the state is obligated by law to release any reports or documents to the public and the Pavillion Area Working Group at the same time they are released to Encana and the EPA," John Fenton and Jeff Locker of the citizens group wrote to Gov. Matt Mead.

The Pavillion Area Working Group — comprised of state and federal officials and local residents — has been monitoring federal and state efforts to determine what caused the well water of some homeowners to turn foul and smell like petrochemicals around the time gas drilling picked up in the area eight years ago.

In December, 2011, a draft report released by the EPA found that hydraulic fracturing may have played a role in groundwater contamination in the Pavillion area. The report caused a nationwide stir as environmentalists said it confirmed their fears that fracking — the process of boosting production from oil and gas wells by fracturing rock with pressurized water — can pollute groundwater.

State and Encana officials were deeply skeptical, however. To this day, the EPA has not finalized its report or submitted it for peer review.

The federal agency handed off its Pavillion investigation to Wyoming officials last summer.

Both upcoming reports will detail recent investigations by the Wyoming Oil and Gas Conservation Commission into the cause of the problem. The reports could go to Encana and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for review within weeks.

One report that was recently completed and sent to an independent expert for review examines the structural integrity of gas wells. A second report nearing completion looks at petroleum industry waste pits associated with decades of oil and gas development in the area.

The procedure for the release of the reports has been in place for a year, and Gov. Matt Mead feels strongly the documents shouldn't be publicly released before they're finalized, Mead spokesman Renny MacKay said Friday.

MacKay said the state will give Encana and EPA no more than 30 days to review and comment on the reports.

The draft reports and any related comments submitted by Encana and the EPA will be released to the public at the same time the final reports are released, MacKay said.

"We will discuss this issue with the attorney general but the hope is we can release this all at once at the end," he said of the group's records request.

Locker and Fenton didn't return phone messages Friday seeking comment. On Wednesday, The Associated Press filed a similar records request without foreknowledge of the Pavillion group's request.

Another state study overseen by the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality will analyze the results of additional testing of water wells in the Pavillion area. That report is due to be completed late this year.

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